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FOREIGN AND SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE USSR.

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THREE BRITISH SPECIALISTS, VISITING THE SOVIET UNION IN 1961, STUDIED BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN SOVIET ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS. THEIR EXAMINATION OF THE TYPES OF SCHOOLS, LANGUAGE POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY, TEACHER TRAINING, METHODOLOGY, AND MATERIALS REVEALED THAT SOVIET EDUCATORS WERE INTENT UPON IMPROVING FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS, ESPECIALLY ENGLISH. INNOVATIONS INCLUDE EARLIER INTRODUCTION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, SMALLER CLASSES, WIDE USE OF MECHANICAL TEACHING AIDS, AND THE USE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN OTHER SUBJECT AREAS. ALSO, WIDER PRESERVICE AND INSERVICE TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN INSTITUTED. SOVIET LANGUAGE SPECIALISTS SEEM TO HAVE A HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE, AND THEY APPROACH FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AS A SCIENTIFIC OPERATION. ALTHOUGH EMPHASIS ON UNIFORM CURRICULUM RESULTS IN SOME WASTAGE AND LACK OF ATTENTION TO INDIVIDUAL STUDENT DEVELOPMENT, LANGUAGE PROGRAMS APPEAR GENERALLY SUCCESSFUL AND ARE CARRIED OUT WITH "ALMOST CLINICAL EFFICIENCY AND OBJECTIVITY." (AR)

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NOTE

In January 1961 an Agreement was concluded between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Relations in the Scientific, Technological, Educational and Cultural Fields 1961–63. Article VI of the Agreement stipulated for the visit to the Soviet Union of three specialists from the United Kingdom to study an aspect of Soviet education. Mr. C. Cunningham, H.M.I., Mr. F. C. Gregory of the Latymer School, London, Mr. E. Glyn Lewis, Staff Inspector, Ministry of Education, were invited to study the teaching of foreign languages and bilingual education in the U.S.S.R. During the period 25th February to 13th March 1962 they visited schools and Pedagogical Institutes of various kinds in Moscow, Leningrad, and the Republic of Georgia. They were met by every kindness and consideration.

The following report was prepared by Mr. E. Glyn Lewis, H.M.I., and approved by the other members of the delegation.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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1. TYPES OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Pre-school education. There exist in Moscow over 2,300 nurseries and kindergartens and children are admitted to the latter at three years of age. They are kept at these establishments for twelve hours each day. Our visit to one of these schools, on the outskirts of Moscow, was a pleasant experience. The kindergarten was typical of all the others in having about 100 pupils and a staff of eight teachers and twenty-three domestics, working in two shifts. It employs in addition a part-time specialist in English who visits the school three times a week.

Schools. There exist five types of schools, four of which we were able to sample.

The traditional type of All-Age, or General Education School. Pupils are admitted at the age of seven and may leave to undertake apprenticeship at fifteen, or they may at the same age transfer to another school which caters for the kind of vocational specialisation the pupil requires, or they may continue at the same school until they are eighteen. This type of school has been accustomed to offer a choice of languages.

The Special Foreign Language Medium High School. To try to meet the need for well-qualified linguists special language schools were opened after the war. In 1948 and 1949, influenced by the work of L. V. Scherba,[1] schools were established in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov, Saratov and Tomsk to give intensive training in a foreign language. In 1957 the programme was extended and new schools were opened in Leningrad, Stalingrad, Gorki, Kazan, as well as other large towns and cities. These schools are meant to teach certain subjects through the medium of the foreign language. Only one foreign language is offered. The intention is to have at least three of these Foreign Language Medium Schools in each Micro-Rayon (or School Zone), and to transfer all the "normal type" schools into this pattern. At present, however, a Zone may have schools of both types, and since the Foreign Language Medium Schools offer several advantages and have great prestige, only about 50% of those who wish to enter can be accepted. We have no doubt that simple admission tests are given at the age of seven in order to select the most suitable children.

Experimental Schools. So far as the teaching of languages is concerned there are no essential differences between the Experimental Schools and the others. But they are related closely to Pedagogical Institutes; they have an intake of pupils twice a year, and a selective upgrading or promotion system. For these reasons, they should be mentioned separately. We visited one such school in Leningrad. It has close connections with the Hertzen Institute, and has served as a testing ground for new developments in methods, and textbooks. Research based upon the observation of the behaviour and the learning processes of children, particularly in language, is conducted and the school has published the results in its own monographs. The study of language learning, the use of T.V. for teaching, and the development of visual aids are the subjects of recent or current research.

Boarding Schools. Towards the end of our visit, because we had been told that one of the reasons for the increasing number of the Foreign Language Medium Schools was the experience that had been gained in the Boarding Schools, we visited such a school in Tbilisi. Pupils are selected on the basis of family need and possible deprivation. The children appeared to be far less bright and more inhibited than those we met in other schools. On the other hand the educational, medical and recreational facilities appeared to be very good, and the material provision to be lavish by our standards, especially some forms of equipment—scientific and recreational. The normal classes have thirty pupils, but for the teaching of a foreign language these classes are split into groups of ten. Among the specialist staff of thirty-three teachers there are four teachers of English, and among the twenty-five tutors three equally well qualified English specialists. A significant proportion of the pupils had speech difficulties, but they were all taught at least three languages: Georgian, Russian and a foreign language.

Pioneer Groups and Palaces. Pioneer Groups and Pioneer Palaces play an extremely important part in the completely integrated system of education for children between seven and eighteen. We saw the Pioneer Group Centres of all the schools we visited and spent some illuminating hours at the Pioneer Palace at Tbilisi. This institution, housed in a former palace, has 300 rooms and caters for 8,000 Pioneer Group members. They visit the Palace for two hours twice a week and they can choose to pursue not more than two selected occupations from a wide range of subjects. Our visit was a memorable experience. The varied activities help the teaching of languages by providing a background of experience which is stimulating and informative. The Pioneer Palace, however, caters for young linguists specifically by providing them with additional instruction in very small groups in the foreign language they are taught at school. In the Tbilisi Pioneer Palace there are four full-time teachers of English, and a comparable number of German and French teachers.

Within the system of formal education it is possible to distinguish several important features which are relevant to the consideration of language teaching. The schools are organised as All-Age Schools, with three clearly defined stages or departments—Primary or Elementary from Grade 1 to 4 (seven years—eleven years); Secondary—Grades 5 to 8 (twelve—fifteen); and Higher Education or High Schools, up to 10th Grade at present, but soon to be raised to 11th Grade (eighteen years of age). 43% of the pupils remain beyond the age of fifteen. There is no streaming of pupils, and all pupils follow the same curriculum. Even when classes are split into three small groups there is no "setting" according to ability or aptitude. Looked at from the standpoint of academic achievement and attainment in languages, the present system may be disadvantageous to the most able boys and girls. But there may be countervailing social advantages in the present system not only to the group to which the abler pupils belong, but to the abler pupils themselves.

The optimum size of the schools is set by the Minister of Education. Single-shift schools are in the range of 520 pupils in country districts and between 800 and 900 in towns. Schools working two shifts need to be not less than about 1,200 and not more than 1,300. This means that nearly all schools have something between a 1½ to 2 form entry annually.

2. LANGUAGE POLICY AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Administrators. Language policy, and particularly the teaching of foreign languages, has been a major concern of the highest ranks of government and administration in the U.S.S.R., and several official pronouncements have been made. The most comprehensive of the recent statements of policy was reported in *Pravda*, 4th June, 1961—"U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers' Decision on Improving Foreign Language Instruction."[2] It states:

> "The U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers has directed the Union Republic Councils of Ministers, the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education, and all Ministries and Departments responsible for educational establishments to take steps to remove the shortcomings in foreign language instruction. . . To this end the U.S.S.R. State Planning Committee and the Union Republic Councils of Ministers must provide in their annual plans for the allocation of the required equipment and aids for foreign language instruction in Schools. . . . Inadequately trained foreign language instructors are to be sent to advanced training courses or dismissed."

There are several reasons for the urgent review of language policy and the measures which have been taken. There is first of all acute dissatisfaction with the more arid, abstract and *a priori* theories in education, as in social and political thinking generally,

and this has resulted in a willingness to abandon doctrinaire views about the teaching of languages. This willingness has been reinforced by a realisation that, whatever might be the theoretical validity of these views, they did not appear to be producing results. This was the view expressed in the *Pravda* pronouncement:

> "In the main, graduates of general-education schools and higher and specialised secondary institutions have a poor knowledge of foreign languages. Because of their limited vocabulary and a purely academic knowledge of grammar, they are unable to translate foreign language texts without dictionaries. They are particularly weak when it comes to speaking a foreign language." [3]

This dissatisfaction is nothing new: it had been expressed in *Pravda* as far back as 30th November, 1956, and even earlier.[4] Some educationists tried to analyse the causes of the poor results and laid part of the blame upon the method of training teachers of foreign languages. They instanced in particular the analytical method based upon the study of separate "aspects"—lexicology, syntax, phonology, etc. About four years ago this matter was discussed in *Uchitelskaya Gazeta*, but our experience does not suggest that there has been any fundamental change. Others, including Arakin, referred to the organisational deficiencies, among which were included uneconomic use of qualified teachers, inadequate equipment, and the indifference of some heads of schools. Other deficiencies referred to were poor methods of training teachers, lack of books and opportunities for discussing problems of methods, as well as an absence of an appropriate atmosphere in schools and colleges.

That this critical attitude is still encouraged is reflected by the fact that we were told by the Deputy Minister in Georgia that the Council of Ministers of that Republic were meeting the following day to review their Foreign Languages programme. In Leningrad we were told that on 11th April the teachers were due to present their assessment of the development of the Foreign Language Medium Schools.

But apart from a general sense of dissatisfaction there are more positive considerations behind the present drive. A writer in *Vestnik Vysshei Shkoly* [5] points out the need for competent linguists in order to profit from the achievement in science of other countries. Secondly, because of the need to relate school and society as closely as possible, languages should be taught not as intellectual disciplines (with all that that implies of analysis and formal grammar) but as adaptable means of communication. Thirdly, a knowledge of foreign languages is essential if the U.S.S.R. is to play its part in international affairs. Since the war the interests of the Soviet Union in the Eastern countries has increased enormously; consequently in 1944 Kazan University introduced the teaching of Arabic. In 1957 in some of the principal towns of the Uzbek Republic, schools were opened in which major Asian languages—Arabic, Hindi and Chinese—were taught; even in Moscow and Leningrad there are some such schools. But it is also acknowledged in the U.S.S.R. that many of these countries, in addition to maintaining their own native languages, require a command of at least one world language. The particular world language will vary according to the traditional, social and political associations and former affiliations of these countries. Consequently the U.S.S.R. in teaching Western foreign languages in its schools is concerned to enable its own people, institutions and trade corporations to have an entry into developing countries. This is one reason why in June 1961, "The U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers points out that in the practice of schools there are disproportions in the foreign languages studied. . . . The Councils of Ministers of the Union Republics and the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education have been directed to determine within three months the most advisable proportion of the foreign languages to be studied at schools." [6]

Attitude of teachers to language policy and method. In the first place the general framework of education is undoubtedly authoritarian and monolithic. Teachers are directed for the first two years to the areas most in need of their particular specialism, and serving teachers can be and are required to undertake extensive refresher courses every five years. Part of the explanation of the authoritarian attitude to education derives

not so much from its social or political assumptions as from its scientific claims. In our educational tradition, teaching is an art which depends as much upon the contact of personalities as upon the substance of what is communicated or the method employed. In the U.S.S.R. it is argued differently: if after experiment and research, with opportunities for trial, a particular method, textbook or programme proves more effective than any other, it is held that there is every justification for requiring all teachers to accept the approved approach. They would probably agree with T. H. Huxley: " The only freedom I care about is the freedom to do right; the freedom to do wrong I am ready to part with on the cheapest terms to anyone who will take it of me."

Within the accepted frame of reference a considerable amount of discussion has gone on for some time and there is a wide diversity of well-informed opinion regarding the teaching of languages. In 1960 there was held at the Gorki Teachers' Foreign Language Institute a Methodological Conference,[7] the report of which makes it clear that there was considerable disagreement on fundamental questions of method and on such subjects as the relation between the functions of speech in the native and foreign language, the interrelation of the two languages and how children learn to speak foreign languages; the relation between the child's ability to think and his command of the first and second language.

We met Head Teachers who suggested modification of the authorised programme so as to introduce, for example, the foreign language earlier than the six years of age which is declared policy for kindergartens or to use the foreign language to teach a different subject than the one proposed. Furthermore, it was generally accepted that any teacher could write a new textbook and would be permitted to experiment with the material necessary for its preparation, with the concurrence of the Academy of Pedagogical Science. Finally, the existence of Experimental Schools which work in close contact with the Pedagogical Institutes ensures a progressive approach to the teaching of foreign languages at all levels, and suitable guidance and support for this progressive approach.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY: ORGANISATION

The attitude of educationists in the U.S.S.R., until recently, has been that expressed by A. I. Thomson,[8] a Russian authority on teaching methods. No matter how favourable an early introduction might be to the actual acquisition of the foreign language he thought it inadvisable to begin its study until the child had developed his framework of conceptual thinking in his mother tongue. In itself the process of learning one's native language is far from easy for a young child, and for this reason Thomson insisted that the study of another language should be commenced only after the native language is sufficiently firmly based. But of recent years, partly because of the pressure of circumstances, and partly because of the greater realisation of the comparative ease with which bilinguals in the U.S.S.R. master more than one language, the tide of opinion has turned in favour of experimenting with the early introduction of a foreign language. Since 1954 several large cities in the Ukraine and Russia have introduced to children of seven years of age a programme of English teaching based on imitation, without the introduction of generalisations and rules. The children were meant to learn about 200 words in the first year grouped according to such subjects as " Our class ", " About myself ", " My day ", " The seasons ".

Following this development, and partly to facilitate the work of the seven year old children, a number of kindergartens began to introduce the study of a foreign language at the age of six, and later some schools began at five and even four. A meeting was called at the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation in 1958 especially to discuss this introduction of a foreign language into kindergartens. Although it was decided to permit the continuation and extension of the experiment, some of those who attended had considerable reservations, which V. S. Ginsberg, of the Hertzen Institute

expresses: " there is still much that is not clear about this whole question and will require further research. Factors which might have a negative effect on the child's development and native language will have to be studied." [9]

In consequence of these developments Moscow alone has 500 kindergartens where English is taught to something like 20,000 children of five years and over. In kindergartens where the children are bilingual, as in Georgia or Armenia, the mother tongue and the *foreign* language, not the second language, are the two languages which are taught. So far as the General Education, or All-Age Schools are concerned, the officially stated age of introduction of the foreign language is eight years (the 2nd grade).

Use of the foreign language as a medium of instruction. In 1961 the Union Republic Council of Ministers were instructed to open at least another 700 General Education Schools where several subjects would be taught in a foreign language (Foreign Language Medium Schools). The intention, we understand, is that Geography should be taught in the foreign language at the 6th grade (thirteen years of age), and contemporary history in the 7th or 8th grade for three hours a week; and that in the 11th grade, the last year of general education, physics and technology should be taught in the foreign language.

Allocation of time. Until fairly recently the amount of time given to the foreign language was inadequate by any standard and *its distribution unsatisfactory.*[10] Now all periods are forty-five minutes each, and in the normal type General Education School the first six grades have four hours a week, and the 7th to the 11th grades three hours. In the General Education School where some subjects are to be taught in the foreign language, the corresponding figures are five hours and four hours. In addition, these schools will be using and so teaching the language during the three hours of geography and contemporary history from the 7th grade onwards, with even more time in the 11th grade for physics, in the foreign language. The official view is that the number of required classroom lessons—for most of the higher educational institutions—should not be less than 240 hours annually.

Size of classes and number of teachers. The size of the normal class in all General Education Schools of whatever kind is about thirty-six. But so far as foreign languages are concerned " at General Education Schools with qualified foreign language instructors . . classes in which there are more than twenty-five pupils should be divided into two groups." [11] In the Foreign Language Medium type of General Education School, where only one foreign language is taught, a class is split into three small groups ranging from eight to fourteen.

The number of teachers of a foreign language in any particular school is relatively very high: in schools of 800 pupils, there may be fourteen full-time teachers of a foreign language. Consequently, one teacher may devote all his time during the week to no more than seventy-five pupils.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY: TRAINING OF TEACHERS

Facilities. At all the institutions where teacher training is undertaken there are day, evening and correspondence groups. The programmes of the day and evening students are identical, but the correspondence groups are in a very different situation. At one time in some of the institutions groups of correspondence students were being given only two hours of direct consultation with supervisors before examinations. Consequently, instructors had little personal knowledge of the student. In these circumstances, some institutions began to introduce new methods: lectures were given to correspondence students two or three times a term on the main points of grammar; opportunities for

group and individual consultations were increased. In addition, a small amount of organised reading was set, and the number of test papers and written exercises was reduced, since these did not help to improve oral command. Another difficulty which faces the correspondence student is that the ordinary textbook is of very limited value; for this reason the Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages in Moscow is at present experimenting with a textbook accompanied by a series of tapes. Some institutions, however, are abandoning the correspondence section of their activities.

Pedagogical Institutes. We spent nearly a whole day at the Hertzen Pedagogical Institute, Leningrad, which has had a deservedly high international reputation for over forty years. The Director welcomed us cordially and explained that England was warmly regarded at the Institute because of the time Hertzen had spent there. The Institute has 13,000 day, night, and correspondence students following a five-year course. There are ten faculties, including foreign languages, and a department for Peoples of the North.

Pedagogical Institutes for Foreign Languages. The Moscow Institute is remarkably well equipped, with premises well adapted for language teaching. It has a very fine library of well over 80,000 volumes and a special library of speech recordings and tapes. It has over 1,000 students in the day and evening sections alone. We saw an oral practice lesson being taken by a supervisor who was a native of the U.S.A., but who had lived in the U.S.S.R. for many years. The texts she used were taken from the *Daily Worker*, but her linguistic background was clearly American. We were accompanied for several hours by the head of the English department, and we had long conversations with several groups of students about the work of H. E. Palmer, which they knew very well, about difficulties presented by English tenses and the article, and about contemporary English writers. We also had a discussion with the Professor of Lexicology at the Institute about problems of vocabulary selection and grading and the limitations of present criteria.

Tbilisi Institute of Foreign Languages was founded in 1948 and teaches German, French and English—which is taught to well over half the students. Among these are representatives of fifty different nationalities of the U.S.S.R. It is proposed to introduce Spanish, Italian, and several East European languages, for instance, Bulgarian, as subsidiary languages. Each of us visited three different classes, in one of which a teacher handled a language laboratory group with great skill. Another small group was heard in a reproduction, or set oral composition class.

Features of the training. All students who attend the Pedagogical Institutes are destined to become teachers and, in general, they are trained to teach children either in kindergartens, or pupils up to the age of fifteen. Not all the students who study languages at universities, or in Institutes of Foreign Languages, intend to be teachers, but they all receive some measure of teacher training. Students have a programme of thirty-six hours a week of study. Of this amount, at least six hours a week must be spent in actual oral activity under supervision. Facilities for additional voluntary study are provided. Students are taught in very small groups and the regulations lay down a maximum of ten students and an optimum of seven in a group for practical language work.[12]

Students devote 80% to 90% of their allocated time to the academic study and practice of their language: only 10% to 20% of their time is devoted to professional—methodological and psychological—aspects of their course. This is a major difference between the teacher training courses in Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. Teaching practice begins in the fourth year: students undertake a period of one month's observation or "passive practice" in the October of that year and later in the same academic year. In their fifth year they put in two similar periods of actual teaching. (A student during the course of his training will have spent over 2,200 hours in practical classroom instruction in the language and less than 200 hours in the theory of teaching.

Practical training in a foreign language is carried out according to "linguistic aspects,"

the course being divided into lexicology, grammar, phonetics, reading and translation, under different instructors. About three or four years ago the validity of this method of linguistic training was discussed. It was felt that the formal and analytical method of teaching the language to school children, which was severely criticised, had been made almost inevitable by the disjunctive approach to the training of the teachers. As a result, some changes have been made but no fundamental alteration has occurred in the system of training by linguistic aspects. It is difficult to see how any can be made for some time to come, since the very highly specialised and departmentalised organisation of the staff of the university departments of philology or languages, and of the Pedagogical Institutes of Foreign Languages, imposes an analytical system on the training programme.

The supervision of the student is very close for the first two years of the course. Perhaps the closest co-operation of student and supervisor, in the last stages of the course, arises out of the dissertation or thesis which a student has to prepare under the guidance of the specialist in the subject the student has chosen. The study of literature plays only a relatively subordinate role. The predominant aim is to give the students command of speech and a high level of fluency. At the same time, the students are interested in and eager to know about the literature of the language they are learning. There is no reason to believe that the subordinate role which literature plays in their training limits their personal interest in it.

Training of teachers to teach subjects in a foreign language. The U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers directed that, beginning with the 1961–62 academic year, courses should be organised at universities and Pedagogical Institutes, for intending teachers of subjects other than languages at these schools where a number of subjects are taught in foreign languages. These courses are arranged within the specialist subject. The students studying any of these subjects are divided into four sections, three of which follow the traditional course instituted for those preparing to teach the subject in the mother tongue. The fourth group is given ten hours a week instruction in the foreign language, and in problems of teaching the subject in that language. In order that they may also be as proficient as the students of the other three groups in their special subject, an extra year is added to their course, making it, in all, a six-year course. Within the Pedagogical Institutes special courses are also being instituted to meet the needs of teachers of foreign languages in the kindergartens; and a course has been organised for boarding school tutors.

Staff. Although we estimated a staff to student ratio of one to seven in the institutes we visited, we have no reliable information about that ratio and comparison between the situation in Great Britain and in the U.S.S.R. cannot be carried too far, because of the existence of evening students and, more especially, of the very large number of correspondence students.

The lecturers and tutors possessed a very high level of competence in spoken English and had a sound background of theoretical training and of linguistic scholarship. The young teachers in the institutes were well versed in the development of general linguistics, and were able and anxious to discuss the specifically British contribution to this discipline.

At all levels, the teachers in the institutes work very hard. It is true that much of their time is taken up with individual consultation, and practical work with small groups, but they are actually teaching for a considerable part of each day—one lecturer of senior grade estimated that she taught small groups, gave individual attention or delivered lectures during four to five hours on six days a week.

Finally, a good deal of valuable and interesting research is being carried out in the institutes. It is estimated that 40% of the time of any senior member of the teaching staff is given to research. Much of the new material incorporated in revised textbooks is produced there.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY: METHOD

Two basic theoretical considerations are built into the methods of teaching foreign languages at the present time. Before its modification, the programme of foreign language instruction aimed at *studying* rather than *acquiring* the language. Among the most serious defects of the former method was the over-emphasis upon description of the language rather than practice, and an overloading of the programme with formal grammar. According to the new programme "every foreign language lesson should consist mainly of the performance of different exercises which are to be conducted in the foreign language The main task in teaching a language is not to impart knowledge about the language but to develop the ability to use it. This requires numerous exercises. . . . In order to adhere to the main idea of the programme the exposition of the material must meet at least two demands: it must have a practical orientation and it must be brief." [13]

This insistence on what is called "productive learning" is fundamental to the present approach. With it go three further developments. In the first place, the amount of language to be learned has been reduced. A comparison of the new programme with that of previous years shows that the 3rd grade (ten years of age) is now expected to have mastered 700 words and collocations, instead of more than double that number in the former programme. Not only has the amount been restricted but it is graded differently: the 6th grade is expected to learn 200 words but the 8th grade only 175 new words. This redistribution of vocabulary load enables the older pupils to revise the old material frequently. Secondly, there has been a new approach to the selection of the grammatical elements to be taught. The new programme includes only those grammar rules which are necessary for developing both speech and writing. Furthermore, the range of the grammatical material is limited and the reading texts simplified to avoid alternative forms and structures. Thirdly, this apparent restriction goes hand in hand with a stress upon an increasing number of exercises.[14] This in turn is related to the extensive use of reproductive methods. The attitude towards the mechanical memorisation of words and structures has changed. The new programme stresses the fact that it is impossible to get along without considerable memorisation work: the rote learning of dialogues and excerpts from prose containing the linguistic structures and stock phrases which have to be acquired is recommended strongly. "Such oral reproduction," it is stated, "must be given a more prominent place. . . . It does not matter that in the beginning the student will find it hard to depart from the text and his account will sound like a memorised recitation. Even this is useful." [15]

The second basic theoretical consideration is called in the U.S.S.R. "the principle of consciousness in teaching." In the past this principle has been used to justify the method against which the teachers and theoreticians have revolted. According to L. V. Scherba, our consciousness naturally expresses itself in the vernacular. Consequently, a foreign language can be mastered only by adopting a different and more formal approach. The views expressed by Palmer, leaning towards imitative assimilation, were opposed to these, and, although Russian teachers do not accept Palmer's views without qualification, it is very largely their impact which has brought about recent changes in the interpretation of the "principle of consciousness." One of the manuals of methods states "many methodologists and language teachers, by interpreting this principle incorrectly, maintained that whenever pupils encountered any new phenomenon, it had to be analysed, considered theoretically and compared with a corresponding feature in the native language.[16] In effect the "principle of consciousness" assures two things in the present system of teaching: more formal teaching of grammar than is advocated by Palmer and greater emphasis upon the value of the mother tongue as a "platform" for teaching the foreign language, though translation is discouraged.

The lessons which we observed were remarkable for their thoroughness and the intensity of effort demanded of the teachers and pupils. Since any one class represented a considerable range of ability and aptitude for languages, this intensity might be

expected to be rather burdensome to some pupils. But we saw nothing to confirm our expectation, and this may be due to the favourable attitude of the pupils to the language, the smallness of the class and the close relationship between teacher and pupil and between the various members of the class. Finally, the intensity of effort was compensated for by the variation in type of class work: any one lesson would consist of a story told by the teacher, or read by some of the pupils; questions asked by the teacher and questions addressed by the pupils to the teacher or to each other; recapitulation of the story bit by bit by successive pupils, and finally complete recapitulation by one pupil. All the while the oral work would be corrected or drilled incidentally, individually or collectively. In addition, language games and songs would be introduced at appropriate points.

But perhaps one of the most interesting features of method we observed was the uniformity of the approach and its consequent predictability. In the hands of some teachers this approach can become mechanistic and uninspired. But there is much to be said in its favour. If language acquisition is a matter of acquiring satisfactory habits of response, then predictability in the presentation of the stimuli is a prerequisite. Uniformity is an aspect of predictability, and we saw no evidence that uniformity or predictability need necessarily inhibit competence or undermine enthusiasm.

Reading had an important place in the lessons which were observed, and consisted of intensive study of a text; pupils were required to prepare a page of reading for each lesson. Extensive reading within the limits of approved lists of books was also encouraged and expected of the pupils.

6. AIDS, MATERIAL AND ASSISTANCE TO TEACHERS

Mechanical aids. Most of the schools we visited possessed tape recorders and projectors. We saw some use being made of projectors, but less of the tape recorder. Some schools had several rooms equipped as rudimentary language laboratories, but we saw nothing to convince us that the ability of the teachers to use these, or in fact their willingness to do so, is any greater or better than those of teachers in this country. It is true, possibly, that their schools are better supplied with such equipment and that their teachers, however inexpert they may be, are more conscious of its value, and of the need to use it. Furthermore, a great deal is being done to train existing teachers to use mechanical aids: the Experimental School at Leningrad has equipped five rooms for the purpose; it has fourteen rooms equipped with projectors and it has a television reception room. The language and visual material used by the teachers—on tape and for projection—in teaching English was of Russian origin and not particularly satisfactory from the standpoint of linguistic authenticity.

Broadcasting and television. Special language programmes are broadcast every Friday at five p.m. and these are regarded as useful in themselves and excellent indications of the possibilities of the medium. Experimental language programmes have been televised also. "Everyday English by Television" started in January 1960 in Kharkov, and there is now a demand for a series for beginners, another for correspondence students of colleges and schools, and one to help pupils of the top grades of the secondary schools.

Display material. Some schools had veritable museums of objects for use in teaching, and of pictures or cards for games and testing. Some of the rooms in which a foreign language was taught were colourful, and the pictures, etc., on the walls were calculated to stimulate even an indifferent pupil. Much of the display material related to the country of the language being taught was of Russian origin. The linguistic content was sometimes suspect if not incorrect and this detracted from its usefulness. Some of the captions to display material were unidiomatic, or had an incorrect word order; the voices on tape were Russian and the intonation markedly so. This lack of linguistic

authenticity is a major weakness. Because of it the Russians build into their system of teaching the very faults which otherwise they do their best to eradicate.

Textbooks. The preparation and the approval of textbooks for the teaching of foreign languages are the responsibility of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. Teachers may propose a textbook, and the proposal will be considered by a committee of teachers, administrators and members of the Academy. The texbooks which we examined, and more especially the textbooks in English, appear to be well graded and the linguistic content seems to have been selected with care. They contain an ample selection of prose passages with an abundance of exercises and suitable drills. But although some of the reading material is pleasant and humorous, it cannot be said that the format of the books is attractive. Illustrations are mediocre and the pages much too compressed and crowded. The supplementary reading material is more attractive, and some of the books which have been prepared for younger children are very attractive indeed. However, much the best of this supplementary reading material for young children is produced in Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Assistance to staff. There are three important forms of professional assistance available to teachers of foreign languages. First, inspectors are appointed by the various Ministries of Education, or in the large cities like Leningrad or Tbilisi by the City Education Department. In Leningrad there are eighteen general inspectors, each of whom looks after two districts within the city and is available for all educational purposes; in addition to these there are specialist inspectors for certain subjects, among which are included the foreign languages. In the Republic of Georgia the inspectorate consists entirely of specialists, including inspectors for each of the foreign languages. The inspectors do not now report on schools or teachers, though up to a year or two ago they did; they are appointed simply to advise their respective Departments, and to help the teachers.

The second form of assistance is the opportunity for consultation at the Pedagogical Institutes. The teachers of foreign languages in the Foreign Language Medium Schools, for instance, teach during only five of the six days on which the school is open. The sixth day they are expected to spend in joint consultation, or in study at the Pedagogical Institutes.

The third form of assistance is the refresher course which teachers can be required to attend. New methods of teaching are demonstrated and visits by teachers to schools using progressive and enlightened methods may be arranged. Teachers are kept up to date in their specialist subject and new developments, for instance, teaching through the medium of the foreign language, the introduction of foreign languages into Kindergartens, and Boarding Schools education, are dealt with.

All this is identical with the provision made by the Ministry of Education, the Institutes of Education and Local Education Authorities in England and Wales. The differences lie elsewhere. The first of these is the centralised and co-ordinated system of the provision. Whatever its disadvantages, this is a more economical arrangement and partly for that reason, better equipment and more generous staffing is possible than in some parts of England and Wales. The second difference lies in the element of obligation or compulsion which is built into the system of courses. We got the impression that compulsion was not or did not need to be resorted to frequently. The fact remains, however, that the sanction exists.

Every teacher in Leningrad takes an extended refresher course once every five years, the Institute at Leningrad providing for over 4,500 teachers annually. Teachers may attend for a full day each week during the course of a whole year, or they may take a more concentrated one- or two-months' course during the summer vacation. In Georgia, which is well able to cater for large groups of teachers at holiday resorts, the concentrated provision is favoured. Attendance at either form of refresher course costs the teachers nothing, and it is fairly clear that the majority look forward to them.

7. RESULTS

The atmosphere inside the schools was one of great activity with order and sense of purpose. The staff were, we believe, genuinely happy to receive us as colleagues and to discuss problems of teaching with us. The pupils we met were invariably eager and lively. The better pupils were confident and self-reliant. They were intensely interested in learning and especially in learning their chosen foreign language. Whatever may be said of the organisation of foreign language instruction, of method, or of the materials available, there is little doubt that the teachers have gone a very long way towards solving one of their major problems—motivation. Pupils work very hard at their foreign languages in school, at home and, if they wish, at Pioneer Palaces. They are also under considerable pressure during the whole of their school career. The publicity given to success in school is pervasive—photographs and names of the best boys and girls, together with the number of books they have read, are displayed along the corridors. Then, again, there exist in the schools various organisations to which pupils belong—the October Organisation, Comsomol, Pioneers. In addition, the Parent Teachers Association, with its well articulated hierarchy, exerts its own kind of pressure upon pupils.

In a consideration of the aim of foreign language instruction four points emerge: a limitation of the amount of language to be acquired; the establishment of firm and confident habits within these limits; an emphasis upon language as a means of communication at the expense of a study of the literature; and great stress upon oral fluency. These aims we felt were being achieved and the system of teacher training, methods and school organisation are excellently calculated to achieve them. Standards differed considerably between the normal type General Education School and the Foreign Language Medium School, the former, even at its best, doing no better in languages than the average Grammar School in this country, and not reaching as high a standard as very many of our better ones. Most of the pupils achieve fluency appropriate to their level of general ability fairly early, and by the time they reach the 9th grade they speak the foreign language confidently, are able to converse in the language fairly easily and show great ease in their handling of vocabulary and structures. But even the best pupils revealed and confessed to having constant difficulty with some aspects of English: tenses, especially the distinction of the continuous and perfect tenses; prepositions; and the use of the English article. The intonation of the pupils, and of the teachers, too, tended to be flat, although the pupils were aware of the key features of English intonation. Because of the interference of Russian with English vowels, and the consequent emphasis which is placed upon the need to lengthen vowels the pupils almost without exception overemphasised vowel length.

We were struck by the fluency of the students of the various institutes and the ease and flexibility of their handling of the language. But again, their high level of attainment in the initial stages is based, we believe, upon a severely restricted range of language.

8. BILINGUAL AND MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

The recent major changes in policy, organisation, and methods of teaching a foreign language in the U.S.S.R. have been facilitated by the growing consciousness of the need to take into account within the educational system the variety of indigenous languages. The mother tongue of one-third of the population of the U.S.S.R. is a language other than Russian, and fifty-nine languages are used in teaching children at school. In the whole of the U.S.S.R. 41% of the schools provide instruction in the major language of the particular Republic in which the school is situated and 35% of the pupils are taught in a language other than Russian. In the Russian Republic itself forty-five languages are used in the various schools, but these languages are taught to and used in teaching only comparatively small minorities, since 90% of the schools use Russian alone as the medium of instruction and 94% of the pupils are taught in that language. Forty-four languages, therefore, are distributed among some 6% of the population. This fact alone

indicates an extremely complicated pattern of bilingualism arising partly from the need for a *lingua franca*—Russian—and partly from the contact of the several minority languages with each other. In consequence, the need to formulate and operate a clearly defined linguistic policy in education is recognised.

This policy is based on the following considerations: the importance of educating a child, especially in the early years, through his mother tongue; the desirability of preserving the national languages of the Union Republics and, where they promise to be viable media of education, the minority languages as well; the social, political and educational necessity of teaching Russian; and, finally, the desirability of teaching a foreign language to all children. A child belonging to a minority group within a Union Republic, other than Russia, may be learning four languages from an early age. The study of three (and sometimes four) languages from an early age is common—the mother tongue, Russian, and a foreign language. This situation, it is realised, may put a great burden on some children. Consequently, in some Union Republics, for example Georgia, an eleventh year was introduced some time ago and in 1958 the teaching of the Russian language in the nationality schools or a national language in Russian schools was made optional.[17]

In the sparsely populated rural areas on the borders of Georgia and Armenia where the numbers attending schools are few, different linguistic groups may be organised in parallel streams or classes. In the towns, which are becoming more and more linguistically mixed because of the influx of populations from other areas, the problem is more acute but easier to deal with administratively. In Tbilisi, for instance, separate schools are provided for the children of different language groups. In these schools the appropriate national language is used as the medium of instruction and the other languages are taught as subjects from an early age. Of course, many children brought up from birth in linguistically mixed urban or rural areas are bilingual when they enter school.

The pattern of bilingual education we have described requires appropriately trained teachers and provision is made for this. In Leningrad the Hertzen Institute has a section for the Peoples of the North, where teachers are trained for schools in the linguistic minority areas. One hundred students, five from each nationality, are enrolled. These must be at least tenth grade students, and they follow, in the main, the same course as the rest of the students of the Institute, but for six years not five. The extra year has been added to their course because they need to perfect not only their Russian,which they will need to teach to all their pupils, but also their national language which is the medium of instruction up to the 7th grade, when a complete switch is made to Russian. In Tbilisi there are separate Georgian and Russian sections at the Pedagogical Institute; and at Erevan, separate Armenian and Russian sections.

The whole problem of teaching children of the Northern People or of the Caucasian peoples is the concern of the Scientific-Research Institute of the Nationality Schools of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. It investigates the situation of minority linguistic groups in the educational system, the teaching of Russian as a second language, and its use as a medium of instruction. The Institute prepares textbooks for teaching the various tongues, as first and as second languages, and it publishes selected bilingual vocabularies. It also adapts Russian textbooks on a variety of subjects for teaching in the nationality languages. Specially prepared Russian textbooks do not seem to be available for the teaching of school subjects to non-Russian speakers through the medium of Russian at the 7th grade and above. This may be due to the possibly high standard of Russian spoken by the children of the "nationalities," so that they are able at the 7th grade to use the Russian textbooks prepared for the same grade of native Russian speakers.

There is less interest than might be expected in the psychological consequences of the impact of two languages on the developing child. It is true that Professor Ginsberg of the Hertzen Institute has raised some questions,[18] but far more intensive study of the psychological aspect is needed. In view of the considerable and important work undertaken by Professor Luria and others on the psychology of language learning of normal

and abnormal children, and of the complexity and variety of bilingual and multilingual situations in the U.S.S.R., much may be expected. The most urgent needs, it is maintained, are the solution of practical problems such as the analysis of the various languages so as to provide adequate textbooks in them. Some of the published material Professor Serdyuckenko gave us is evidence of the work done in this field which could be of value to administrators and teachers in various countries of the Commonwealth concerned with problems of bilingualism.

The existence of such a complicated pattern of bilingualism within the system of education has facilitated recent advances in teaching foreign languages. Some of these advances will in turn serve to make the teaching of a foreign language more and more like the teaching of a second language in a bilingual situation. A foreign language which is taught to children of five and six years of age, and so thoroughly that it can be used in school as a medium of instruction for some subjects, must enter into the pattern of their education very much as Russian now does in some of the "nationalities." It cannot remain a foreign language in the traditional sense; and the intensity of the drive to learn foreign languages must have consequences for the general organisation of schools and the curriculum. We can envisage a time in the near future when the majority of native Russian speakers will be Russian-English bilinguals, so that the majority of non-native Russian speakers in the U.S.S.R. will have three levels of bilingualism: they will be "indigenous bilinguals" in the sense of speaking, for instance, both Armenian and Georgian; in addition they will have an "interior" *lingua franca*, Russian, and an "exterior" *lingua franca*, English, or less frequently German or French.

9. CONCLUSION

The deepest impression left with us after our visits to schools and colleges, and our discussion with research workers and administrators, is of a well-mounted, purposeful and intensive drive to improve the teaching of modern languages, especially English. A new type of General Education School has been created, the main difference between it and the traditional type being the organisation of modern languages within the curriculum: the foreign language is introduced three or four years earlier; it is taught in classes of about a third the normal size, and it is used to teach other subjects. There is a lavish deployment of teachers for the purpose; their training has been highly specialised and intensive, and there is ample opportunity for them to attend refresher courses and to obtain guidance and advice. Mechanical equipment for the teaching of languages is being supplied in increasing quantities, and school libraries, with special allowances for modern languages, are well stocked. This resoluteness of purpose and drive is evident on the strictly professional level. The enthusiasm and thoroughness of teachers, as well as their professional skill, was impressive. While their command of the language they taught might vary quite considerably, their enthusiasm was never in doubt. Purposefulness reveals itself also in the emphasis which is placed on co-ordinating the efforts of all those who are involved—teachers in schools and colleges, research workers and administrators. This in turn leads to well-planned and well-prepared methods and materials. It is true that much of this material lacks authenticity, a considerable defect for which the reasons may be less educational than political and economic. Finally, perhaps the most interesting reflection of the purposefulness of this drive is the determination to use the foreign language as a medium of instruction in important subjects such as history, geography, science and technology.

This intensity of effort is impressive, but it may also be indiscriminate. Given the organisation of the General Education School, its avoidance of streaming and setting, and its uniform curriculum throughout the secondary course, it is probable that in the teaching of foreign languages there is considerable wastage. Our visit was too short, the present approach has been adopted too recently, and the opportunities for evaluating the results too meagre for us to be able to come to any confident conclusion. Furthermore, the high potential of the widespread and politically highly charged interest in foreign

languages, may be such as to overcome such obstacles as the poor ability and little aptitude of many pupils. Even if considerable wastage does occur, the net result may still provide sufficient justification for all the wastage, no matter how great. However, some use of diagnostic periods of teaching might have considerable advantages even within the framework of Soviet assumptions.

Russians insist that to enable the pupils to use the language there must be considerable emphasis on habit formation based on constant practice within a limited area of the language; consciousness on the part of the pupil of the habit he is acquiring, without, however, any formulation in abstract grammatical terms; and recourse to considerable memorisation of texts. Such methods appeared to be successful and to be in line with the best practice of enlightened teachers in Britain. Where they differ from the practice most favoured among our teachers is in the acceptance of a fairly uniform approach to, and materials for, the teaching of a foreign language.

Our final impression is of the highly professional approach to the teaching of foreign languages. The teaching of a language is conceived as a scientific or technological operation; it is planned accordingly and the actual training or instruction is carried out with almost clinical efficiency and objectivity. This again has advantages; but it has also considerable disadvantages if we conceive of the learning of a foreign language as an aspect of enlightenment and personal development and not simply the acquisition of a skill. On the other hand, teachers in the U.S.S.R. would argue that the successful acquisition of a skill is a great part of enlightenment, and that the possibility of rich personal development is provided for by good command of a foreign language.

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